

# Federer, Nadal stay on track

Dominant Sharapova win sets up Wozniacki clash in Australian Open third round

● Consistent Angelique Kerber wins battle of lefties

● Sixth seed Cilic grinds into Open third round

AFP | Melbourne

Roger Federer ground out a tough three-set win to make the Australian Open third round for an incredible 20th straight year yesterday, with long-time rival Rafael Nadal also safely through in his drive towards an 18th Grand Slam title.

Women's defending champion Caroline Wozniacki also progressed to set up a mouth-watering clash next with in-form former world number one Maria Sharapova.

But it was curtains for South African Kevin Anderson, who slumped out to young American Frances Tiafoe and became the highest seed, at five, to be sent packing so far.

On an overcast day at Melbourne Park, second seed Angelique Kerber, the 2016 winner, and former US Open champion Sloane Stephens joined the big guns in round three, but the women's side also saw a top 10 player crash.

Ninth seed Kiki Bertens, who raced through the rankings last



Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a return against Australia's Matthew Ebden

year after winning three titles, was whipped in three sets by Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova.

Federer might be 37 but he's not showing his age, with British qualifier Dan Evans the latest to fall under his spell as he works towards a third successive Australian crown and 21st major victory.

He defeated Evans at Wimbledon last year with the loss of just eight games, but it was a much harder assignment this time, winning 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 on Rod Laver Arena.

"I think if I could have pulled away earlier in the match it might have been easier," said the third seed. "I think he played very well, it was hard to pull

away to his credit."

The Swiss star's Australian achievements so far put him on a par with other six-time winners Novak Djokovic and Roy Emerson -- although the Australian great's victories all came before the Open era.

He next plays American Taylor Fritz.

If he goes on to win the tournament, he will become the first man ever to claim seven or more titles at two Grand Slams, having already won eight Wimbledon.

Nadal had an easier route to round three, outclassing local hope Matthew Ebden 6-3, 6-2, 6-2.

The Spaniard is bidding for his own slice of history by becoming the first man in the Open

era, and only the third in history along with Emerson and Rod Laver, to win each Grand Slam on two or more occasions.

"I played a solid match, I was happy with the way I served. I did a few things very well," said Nadal, who next plays Australian Alex de Minaur. "It is an honour to play here. Was a great atmosphere."

Anderson, beaten by Novak Djokovic in the Wimbledon final last year, was sent home by Tiafoe 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, 7-5.

The fifth seed struggled with an elbow injury early in the clash and couldn't cope with the 20-year-old's power and finesse.

## Collision course

Sixth seed Marin Cilic, who lost



Switzerland's Roger Federer hits a return against Britain's Daniel Evans

in the final to Federer last year, had no such dramas, grinding past American Mackenzie McDonald in four sets and next plays Spanish 26th seed Fernando Verdasco.

Dane Wozniacki, who is battling rheumatoid arthritis, steamrolled Sweden's Johanna Larsson 6-1, 6-3 as she bids to become the first woman to defend the title since Victoria Azarenka in 2013.

It set up a tough clash with five-time Grand Slam champion Sharapova, who blitzed past Sweden's Rebecca Peterson 6-2, 6-1. The Russian is in scintillating form and has dropped just three games in her opening two matches.

"I'm really happy with the way

I performed," said Sharapova, adding that she was looking forward to the Wozniacki showdown.

"It's a tough third round but I have set up the challenge and I'm ready to go out there and take it."

Meanwhile, three-time Grand Slam champion Kerber dominated Brazilian qualifier Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-2, 6-3 to stay on a collision course with Stephens in the quarter-finals.

Stephens, who endured a horror run at Melbourne Park since reaching the semi-final in 2013, exiting in the first round in 2015, 2016 and 2018, swatted aside former doubles partner Tímea Babos 6-3, 6-1.

## Bernardo Silva welcomes return of Man City big guns

AFP | London

Bernardo Silva says Manchester City's squad is approaching full strength at the right time as they mount a four-pronged trophy assault. Kevin De Bruyne and Benjamin Mendy have missed large chunks of the campaign through injury, while David Silva, Fernandinho, Sergio Agüero and Ilkay Gündogan have had spells out recently.

But the Premier League champions are now getting close to full strength, with Mendy the only key player sidelined with a serious injury, and there are hopes he could be back in action before the end of the month.

City illustrated the depth of their squad as they named De Bruyne, Agüero and Riyad Mahrez on the bench for Monday's clash with Wolves and still eased to a 3-0 win.

"It feels like we have all the squad, which is important because we need all of them," said playmaker Silva. "It is good finally to be back together."

"Of course until this moment of the season we have had so many injured players, we never played with the whole squad. To have almost the whole squad available is fantastic for us and it is very good to try and go for all the competitions."

Silva, 24, has no issue with the fact that means increased competition for his own place.

"That is what happens when you play in one of the best teams in the world," he said. "You have fantastic players in your position, you have to work hard to try and play as many minutes as you can."

"That is a good thing. It means you have a good squad. Everyone pushes the other teammates so you have to work harder to get in the team."

Bernardo Silva



## New Zealand's Bevin wins second Tour Down Under stage to lead

The stage win gave New Zealand's Patrick Bevin a 10-second time bonus, lifting him into the overall lead of the race

AFP | Adelaide, Australia

New Zealand time-trial champion Patrick Bevin swooped to take his first cycling World Tour stage and claim the overall lead in Australia's Tour Down Under yesterday.

Bevin, 27, riding for the CCC Team, capitalised on confusion in the peloton sparked by a mass crash inside the final kilometre of the 122-kilometre (70-mile) second stage to power home in the finish.

The Kiwi unleashed a sprint on the uphill 700m finishing straight to reel in Spain's Luis Leon Sanchez before holding off Australian star sprinter Caleb Ewan and Slovakia's former triple world champion Peter Sagan at the line.

The stage win gave Bevin a 10-second time bonus, lifting him into the overall lead of the race, five seconds ahead of Italy's Elia Viviani, who won Tuesday's stage one but could only manage seventh the next day.

Bevin holds a five-second lead over Viviani in the race general classification with Ewan in third place ahead of Germany's Max Walscheid (Team Sunweb).

Walscheid finished 23rd in yesterday's stage through South Australia's famous Barossa Valley wine country in scorching temperatures of 40 degrees Cel-



Race winner and new leader Patrick Bevin (L) from New Zealand of CCC Team crosses the finish in Angaston in the Barossa Valley

sius (104 Fahrenheit).

"I got to pick a pretty good line in the hard, draggy finish. Once Sanchez was off the front in the final it gave me the perfect springboard and I just went long," Bevin said.

"It was definitely a gamble, you could take five seconds today and lose two minutes in three days' time but that's bike racing, we're here to try to win it."

Bevin, whose previous race best in the UCI season-opening tour was 10th in 2016 and 11th last year, avoided a pile-up in the peloton which blocked the road to the Angaston finish line.

The crash left around 25 riders to contest the finale with Bevin surging from deep before dipping in behind Sanchez's slipstream and crossing the line with enough time to clench and

raise his hands in celebration.

His victory is CCC Team's maiden World Tour victory and his first triumph outside of a national championship since winning stage four of Australia's Herald Sun Tour in February 2015.

The peloton once again had to endure brutal temperatures on the stage, which was cut pre-race by 26.9km because of the extreme weather conditions.